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ABSTRACT

In an effort to improve service to all its students, and to provide its faculty members with more flexibility in scheduling their time, the geography department in the College for Liberal Arts has developed an experimental "integrated curriculum." All of the department's courses, whether scheduled in day or evening hours, in summer or other months, have been organized by two-year periods into a single coordinated plan. Students registered in the college may schedule courses offered through Continuing Education and Extension, and vice versa. Faculty members, retaining the equivalent of all conditions of a regular nine-month academic year appointment may fulfill the terms of their appointment by teaching combinations of day, evening, and summer courses. The plan is intended to broaden the scope of courses and increase the number of faculty members available to evening and summer students. It is also expected to free faculty members for extended periods of field and library research and for professional activities that can best be done at times other than evenings and summers. (Author)

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comment

CENTER FOR EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT • UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

Number 29 February, 1977

In Geography Department

Curriculum experiment integrates day, evening, summer courses

In an effort to improve service to *all* its students, and to provide its faculty members with more flexibility in scheduling their time, the Geography Department in the College of Liberal Arts (CLA) has developed an experimental "integrated curriculum." All of the department's courses, whether scheduled in day or evening hours, in summer or other months, have been organized by two-year periods into a single coordinated plan. Students registered in CLA may schedule courses offered through Continuing Education and Extension (CEE) and vice versa. Faculty members, retaining the equivalent of all conditions of a regular nine-month academic year appointment, may fulfill the terms of their appointment by teaching combinations of day, evening, and summer courses.

The plan is intended to broaden the scope of courses and increase the number of faculty members available to evening and summer students. It also is expected to free faculty members for extended periods of field and library research and for professional activities that can best be done at times other than evenings and summers.

This issue of *Comment* reports on this experimental program being conducted by the Geography Department in conjunction with CEE and Summer Session.

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All courses combined in two-year plan

A number of basic features distinguish the Geography Department's experimental integrated curriculum:

(a) The department has incorporated into a single two-year curriculum plan all of the courses it will offer during daytime hours, evenings, and summers. While teaching assignments and course registration formerly were categorized by the unit through which a course was offered (CLA, CEE, and Summer Session), the new plan eliminates these boundaries thus allowing greater flexibility for both students and teachers. The department's total offerings each year will be about equal to the sum of the offerings in the three components of the old system— about 90 one-quarter courses each year in CLA, 12 in CEE, and 8 or more in Summer Session.

(b) Faculty members retain the equivalent of a regular nine-month (i.e. "B") appointment. But while the responsibilities of B appointments ordinarily are fulfilled through daytime teaching (and related activities) during fall, winter, and spring quarters, Geography Department faculty members may satisfy the teaching responsibilities of their appointments by an agreed-upon combination of assignments including evening and summer classes. More specifically, each department member will regu-

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larly teach a full load for six of eight quarters in a period of two academic years; a full load may include both day and evening courses.

(c) "Overload" teaching is reduced, though not eliminated. In the past, the 20 or more courses offered by the department through CEE and Summer Session were taught by individuals from within or outside the department's regular faculty. These individuals received "overload" payments from the other units involved.

Under the new plan, the two units have provided money to the Geography Department to hire two full-time assistant professors on temporary appointments for the duration of the experiment. In return, the Geography Department provides to each unit (CEE and Summer Session) a minimum of six courses. The extension and summer courses are to be taught by a mix of faculty including senior members of the department. While the two faculty positions are temporary for the duration of the experiment, they would become permanent if a decision is made to continue the plan beyond the experimental period. Those filling the positions participate in the full range of departmental offerings.

Since the number of evening and summer courses offered by the Geography Department exceeds the course load equivalent of two full-time faculty members, some courses are still to be taught on an overload basis under traditional arrangements with CEE and Summer Session. The three units believe it would be too costly to replace all overload teaching with additional faculty positions at this time.

The plan costs more per credit than the traditional overload method, both for the academic department and for the cooperating units. The regular salary scale is higher than overload salary rates, so CEE and Summer Session pay more per credit hour taught. At the same time, the two faculty members appointed to make up the difference in the Geography Department's load must have available time for scholarly and service activities, and thus teach a smaller number of courses than are actually provided by the department to the two other units. The department absorbs this expense.

(d) The experimental two-year curriculum began fall quarter, 1976. The department expects that the experiment will be renewed for a second two-year trial before a decision is made regarding its permanent adoption.

(e) All courses in the Geography Department's new integrated curriculum are listed in both the CLA and Extension Classes bulletins. They are open to students of either unit and to students of other units who are eligible to register for courses in CLA and CEE. Students register through the regular procedures of the office they are accustomed to dealing with (either CLA or CEE).

The curriculum plan for the entire two years is posted in the department and in Extension Classes to help students and advisers plan student programs. Evening and summer students in particular may be better able to choose among courses with the knowledge of which courses will be available in the near future.

(f) Department services will be more accessible to all students. Office hours have been extended to accommodate better the needs of evening students. The department office stays open until 6:30 or 6:45 three or four nights each week through rearrangement of civil service staff hours. Some faculty office hours and undergraduate advising hours also have been extended, again by rescheduling some individuals' time. In addition, with a fuller range of faculty activity during the summer than in past summers, the department expects to provide summer students with more opportunities than before for advising and other faculty contact.

CEE, summer offerings broadened

The idea for an integrated curriculum was first proposed in 1969 by John Webb, then department chairman, and was revived in 1974 by the current chairman, Richard Skaggs. Reasons put forth for the experiment fall into two general categories: (a) to broaden the range of both courses and faculty members available to all students, and (b) to provide increased flexibility for faculty members in scheduling their teaching and other academic activities.

Under the traditional system, decisions about what courses would be offered through CEE and Summer Session were more likely to be based on the availability of faculty members than on what courses *should* be offered. For example, some faculty members enjoy teaching extension courses more than others do, and some may seek out extension or summer assignments for extra income. Their courses might therefore have been taught evenings and summers while others' courses were not.

Conversely, there have been times when few faculty members were interested in additional assign-

ments and the department had to recruit from outside the regular faculty.

"Under the old plan, it has been difficult to put together educationally balanced Summer Session and CEE programs," Skaggs said. "Decisions often have been made for a lot of reasons other than educational ones. It is important that this plan broaden the scope of both the *courses* offered evenings and summers and the *people* who teach at those times."

An advantage of the plan is that CEE students will be able to major in geography for the B.A. degree solely through CEE courses. This was not possible in the past because the department was unable to guarantee that all required courses would be offered through CEE within a "reasonable" time span. However, Skaggs said this is not an important aspect of the plan at the moment since it is believed that initially few CEE students will actually want to earn such a degree.

He said the department believes the integrated curriculum is one way to improve service to an increasing number of part-time students as well as full-time students who may wish to schedule their time around a job or other responsibilities. Some CEE students may find it more convenient to attend classes during the day, while some CLA students may choose sections offered in the evening.

"We are convinced that this ought to be considered a possible approach to some aspects of the University's efforts to reach out and serve new groups of students," Skaggs said.

Harold Miller, dean of Continuing Education and Extension, and Willard Thompson, Summer Session director, agreed. Said Miller, "We feel this kind of program is in the best interests of our outreach effort. Under the traditional plan, outreach (extension) teaching has to be paid for on an overload basis. That means that in terms of the department reward system, outreach instruction is not given very high priority.

"The Geography Department plan puts outreach instruction directly into the academic department reward structure—it's not something we (CEE and Summer Session) buy from the individual faculty member."

He pointed out that the Geography Department plan is much like the system used in the Agricultural Extension Service, where part or all of a faculty member's regular duties may involve extension teaching. "That model has worked well for years. It can and should be generalized to other parts of the University, especially as we look at declining enrollments in daytime classes." He said use of the plan could help prevent reduction of faculty size in the face of decreasing daytime enrollments.

Flexible schedules may aid research

The other major reason for the experiment was to give faculty members flexibility in planning their academic activities. "Our people are no longer so closely tied to the nine 'academic months' or to particular times of day," Skaggs said. "This should be especially helpful in planning and carrying out both scholarly and service activities."

"For example, a faculty member may want to do a fieldwork project that is best not done in summer. That person can take off a different quarter to do the project, and not have to sacrifice the difference in pay between regular salary schedules and the lower Summer Session pay.

"Or, a person may need to spend a lot of time looking at materials in a public institution such as the Minnesota Historical Society or state capitol building, which may only be open weekdays from nine to five. That person can teach at night and still have the classroom work, office hours, and related activities considered a part of the regular teaching duties.

"We hope that ultimately this flexibility will lead to increased research productivity."

The schedule of Fred Lukermann is an example of how department members may use the plan to further their scholarly activities. He will not teach during summer, 1977 (his quarter "off" for 1976-77) or during fall, 1977 (his quarter off for 1977-78). He then will teach winter, spring, and summer, 1978, receiving his regular B-base salary.

This arrangement gives Lukermann nearly six months for concentrated research and writing. He will do library research to support previous field work and will do writing on a methodology text, spending several weeks in California and in Greece in connection with his work.

Lukermann thus receives the benefit of an extended research period without the disadvantage of the lower salary that would normally be paid him during the summer. The department and students in turn receive the benefit of Lukermann's courses, availability for advising, and service work during the summer, which would not ordinarily be the case.

Since the department schedule is planned in two-year increments with faculty responsible to teach

during six of the eight quarters, it may not be uncommon for department members to be "off" for two consecutive quarters. It is even conceivable, though not likely to occur often, that one could arrange to be away a full year, taking the last two quarters of one two-year cycle and the first two quarters of the next.

Skaggs said it will be necessary for the department to see that no pattern develops in which people regularly are gone the same quarter every year. "If that happens, you haven't accomplished what you set out to do," he said. "You have just rearranged the existing system."

'Payroll computer not flexible'

Implementation of the plan has not come without difficulties. One general source of problems has been the fact that the Geography Department now must do things *differently* from other departments. "You constantly run afoul of standard operating procedures which in themselves are quite reasonable for the way things usually are, but which don't apply in this situation," Skaggs said. "You have to stop each time and explain, and that is very time-consuming."

An example is the problem of how to appoint faculty to teach during different quarters and at different times of day from what is expected under the regular B appointment. "The payroll computer is not a flexible machine," Skaggs observed. One might think that department members' B appointments could be modified through a system of leaves and special appointments. But the existing system cannot make the necessary adjustments regarding insurance coverage and tax and retirement plan payroll deductions.

The computer is not programmed to make retirement plan deductions during the summer. Nor can it easily deal with a faculty member who, taking staggered leaves during two academic years, works four consecutive quarters in a single tax year. Skaggs said that with a great deal of cooperation from both CLA and central administrators, these problems appear to have been largely worked out. Faculty members will be appointed with regular B appointments, then changed when necessary to a special category for which the computer will allow special arrangements. He said the new category will be termed J— "for jerryrigged."

The department is learning that with paperwork it must anticipate questions and explain irregularities so people handling the papers won't simply lay them aside.

Coordination among units grows

Another general source of problems in implementing the plan has been the difficulty of trying to mesh systems with different, though overlapping, missions. Several key areas have been subjects of discussion among the units:

Course selection. The Geography Department will choose specific courses, keeping in mind the concern of CEE and Summer Session that all the necessary courses be offered within a reasonable length of time for students who may wish to earn degrees.

Teaching assignments. Again, the Geography Department will make specific assignments, consulting with the other units to ensure suitability and variety of instructors.

Control of funds. CEE and Summer Session are providing funds out of which two temporary faculty members have been hired. Arrangements had to be made regarding control of those funds, and a decision is pending on the amount to be contributed by the two units to cover faculty salary increases expected later this year.

Operating procedures. The problem of meshing different systems also surfaced during registration for the first quarter of the experiment. With students registering through two different systems (CLA and CEE) for the same classes, and each office wanting to ensure enough space for its own students, there was inevitable confusion. The system functioned more smoothly winter quarter and is expected to continue to do so.

The new curriculum plan has required some adjustment on the part of department staff members as well. "We have had to become an operation that runs more continuously through the day and year," Skaggs said. "That has implications for when people work. It has required adjustments, but people have cooperated well." He acknowledged that such a plan might encounter difficulties in a department less collegial than his own.

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